

I saw on television, like many others, the fire and collapse of the WTC. I saw "gray" people escaping through clouds of dust. I saw the cheering from various places also; I thought from the West Bank or Bagdad, but actually from Patterson, Passaic and Jersey City.

It was six weeks before I could go to Ground Zero to see for myself. If I didn't see for myself, maybe it only happened on television? What I saw was what looked like some huge gray beast that had fallen from the sky, its bones sticking up and its flesh hanging. People there spoke in hushed tones. Some, when they first got a view, stopped, transfixed by the scene. The police were extra gentle in moving them onto the sidewalks.

Since then, I have seen people squabbling over getting their "fair share" of any money contributed to relief funds and too many politicians and charities warming themselves at the funeral pyre. The squabbling continues over what, if anything, should be built there and who gets the most say.

It's been a year and all that I see are longer lines at airport gates and nail clippers being declared dangerous weapons. The "Forces of Darkness" came to our shores and threw down the gauntlet and we're arguing over money, position and personal power.

Mike Ferrante
Retired
Weehawken

In the space of minutes, over 225 years of smugness vanished on September 11, 2001. After the attack at Pearl Harbor in 1941, our government promised that America would be ever-vigilant and that nothing like this could ever happen again. Our leaders were wrong and this generation suffered their greatest casualties since the War of 1812.

As Chief Operating Officer of the Westfield Volunteer Rescue Squad, I would like every reader to know that I was humbled and proud to be associated with this organization during this period. With no thought to their own safety or to what the long-lasting effects might be, every one of our members responded. Members were in New York every day of the mobilization on a volunteer basis, and it was with a heavy heart that I sent them. Oftentimes, we were rotating our ambulances and crews. And, at no time, did we ever lack for members volunteering to stay back to make sure our town was covered. Those members who assisted in rescue efforts at Ground Zero are forever changed. You could see the change in their eyes - they went in as young, eager volunteers and returned much older and sadder. I know, too, that if any further acts of terrorism should occur in the future, our organization would respond again in exactly the same fashion. It is an honor to be associated with such a group of individuals.

Mike Urso
Captain
Westfield Volunteer Rescue Squad

In the supermarket the other day I reached for a dairy product and checked the expiration date. It said Sept. 11, 2002. It was an eerie moment and it ran through my mind that perishables should not be stamped "expiration 9/11." It seemed insulting to us as Americans and particularly to those people who had lost loved ones.

None of it made any sense: seeing the report of the first plane on TV and believing it to be an accident, hearing about the second one on the radio while en route to work and awakening to the terrifying possibility that America was under attack.

As certainty of the horror became clear, at the office we gathered to pray for the victims and for our country. At home we gathered family, needing the reassurance of being together. I cried for the victims and cried harder for the mothers and fathers who had lost their sons and daughters.

One year later, as we gather to remember the victims of the attack on our country, grief remains and my fear grows. I believe in justice, God, family and community. I believe you reap what you sow. Everyday I pray for peace.

Assemblywoman Linda d. Stender

Each generation of Americans seems to have a "teachable" moment. A moment that defines their direction, that typifies their experience, that embodies their spirit...

Such moments are frequently painful, precipitated by unexpected trauma and loss... We are shaken to the core of our individual and national being... we wonder why.

We are targets, why do people so fear or even hate so much that they would threaten to kill the innocent and powerless to somehow advance their "cause" by violent means? Sad experience now adds 9/11 to the calendar for this generation as Pearl Harbor and the assassination of JFK has been for prior ones.

How shall we respond? heal? remember? honor? How can we find any hope to get us through this mourning into the promise of a better future?

The answer lies, I pray, with our belief in the God who so boldly asserts has blessed these United States. With the guidance of this Divine Providence whom we call by many names - whose Presence we discern in all our daily events and activities, good and bad, large and small, critical and mundane - we will not only survive but will thrive.

Together with this Divine Compass, we will chart the course through tragedy, destruction and loss to the hopeful shore of endurance, toughness, compassion, patience, tolerance and understanding.

Now we pause to remember those who were lost on 9/11, we are grateful for their lives and sacrifices, they are gone from our midst, but we carry them eternally in our hearts.

We uplift their families and share their loss and grieving it is not their wound only but ours as well. We salute with renewed vigor and profound appreciation all those who served without ceasing during this period of confusion and recovery - and who serve us still - in Law Enforcement, Fire and Emergency Medical Services. We commend, too, the volunteer multitude, who served without fanfare, without ego but with profound care for the lost and wounded whether in body, mind or spirit.

God has blessed us richly before, God has sustained us in this latest crisis, may we once more look to the Holy Mountain of Liberty and the Promise of Justice for all and pray again - as with One Voice... God Bless America.

Father Donald K. Hummel
Pastor, St. Bartholomew the Apostle
Scotch Plains



The question asked of me concerning my thoughts on September 11, 2001 is one I will continually mull over for the rest of my life.

That day, our nation suffered an unprecedented loss shared and felt by all. Our entire nation has suffered greatly, but I feel our emergency services suffered the greatest loss. Together with all our county's firefighters, I witnessed our brother firefighters answering the call. We watched as FDNY, NYPD and EMS personnel rushed to the aid of the many who needed their help.

You see, firefighters will always answer the call. When the Twin Towers fell, every firefighter in the world knew the FDNY had suffered severe losses. Our department responded through the Union County Mutual Aid System, placing men and equipment in New York by noon.

Even in the worst situations, the best of a firefighter will always come through. We are not heroes. We do this work because we want to. A true firefighter has it in his heart to respond to whatever the call may be.

On September 11, 2001, 343 firefighters answered that call for the last time. My connection to these true heroes is that they were family; for each firefighter is a part of the large family of several hundred thousand from around the world.

I personally lost some very close friends. I constantly think about this tragic loss and pray that a loss of such magnitude never happens again.

Over the years, firefighters have been referred to as America's heroes. Most of us shy away from that. Everyone that knows us, knows we are just regular people who go to church, get involved in school activities and watch our children's sports competitions.

While our profession is sometimes dangerous and even deadly, true firefighters accept the challenge of serving their community. We will continue to do the job for which we have taken the oath; however, we have learned many things from this tragedy.

The Fire Service is working hard to obtain education, tools and equipment to better equip those who give their lives to serve. My thoughts always go back to communication. This is the key today, as it was on September 11. With proper communication, lives and property can be saved.

Fire Chief John Castellano

For the past 13 years I worked for Cantor Fitzgerald/Espeed as a bond broker and technical support analyst. 9/11/01 was my second wedding anniversary. I was supposed to be away vacationing in Cape Cod but my husband Andrew told me last minute that he had to work on a project, so we didn't go. The night of the 10th I decided that if the weather was going to be pleasant I would stay home and enjoy the day.

The morning of the 11th I woke up and turned on CNBC. I watched in horror as I saw my building 1 WTC in flames. I couldn't believe my eyes. I called my husband who also works downtown and told him what was happening, as we were on the phone the second plane hit building 2, I knew from being in the bombing of "93" that this was a terrorist attack. I was in complete shock. I tried to call my co-workers but could not get through.

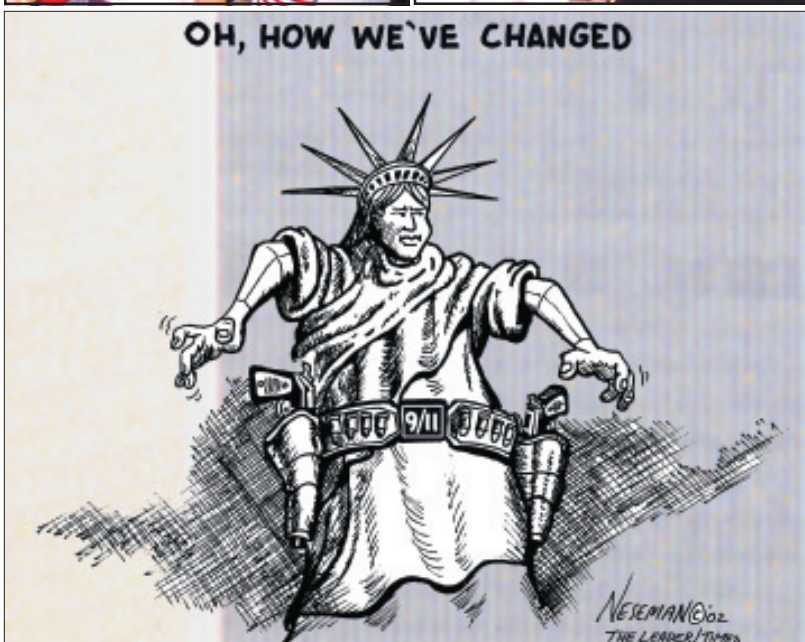
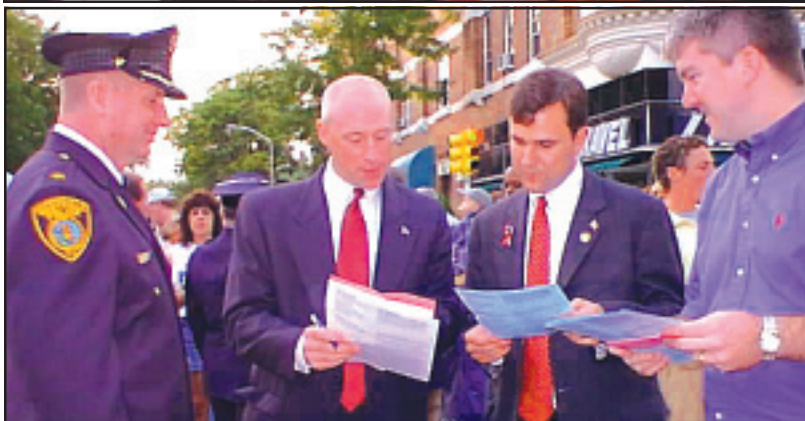
Cantor Fitzgerald is located on floors 101-105 of 1 WTC. I prayed that there would be a way for them to escape, when I saw the buildings collapse I just screamed. To this day I am still in shock. For the 1 year anniversary of I will be in Cape Cod, I will go to church and pray for my friends who were lost, but also to God for saving my life. My condolences go out to all the families of Westfield who lost loved ones that day.

Helen Becker
Westfield

Driving on route 78 towards New York that morning as the towers came into view. I felt sickened by the site. I saw the second plane heading north. The reality was unthinkable. The feelings today are as strong as that morning.

I hope that someday, the world will learn to live together in peace.

Barry Thomasow
CPA
Westfield



I traveled through the WTC early. I would normally be walking through at the time the first plane hit the north tower. We heard the second plane in a tremendous crash. Our building shook, which was 1/4 mile away. One thing I remember was people on the streets helping, handing out water to those who had to walk uptown, in my case to catch a ferry.

It was very sad, but even more shock the actual day. A continuing thought was "our world has changed."

Mike McGlynn
Westfield

While most of my memories of the attack are too tragic to think about, the intense unity felt by all toward their fellow Americans following it is a memory I like to remember everyday. It is my hope that America's next generation continue to stay as united as we have since September 11, whether tragedy is present or not.

Lauren A. Gruman
Classified/Legal Department

9/11 forced us to, once again, shake off our innocence, dig deep within ourselves and decide who we are, what we have become and where we are going. Politics aside, we never fail to come together as a country. In a word, we are optimistic.

Optimism runs through our veins. We can't help it. It's just the way we are.

Dale Neseman
Editorial Cartoonist
Hamburg, N.Y.

On September 11, 2001, our strength as a nation was tested by our enemies. I will never forget the victims and heroes of this assault on our nation - nor the strength, courage and resolve of Americans as we responded. Our nation is united and we will always defend freedom.

Assemblyman Dr. Eric Munoz

The Gardens of Three Thousand Flowers:

What beast has ravaged these gardens And caused the petals to fall? The gardens tended so lovingly By families one and all.

So many flowers unique in form - Curving up round the twin spires Along the quaint and quiet Keystone field, All consumed by Evil's fire.

The pilgrims cry with hurt And leave a message behind, Their heartfelt messages a blessing And their love is so very kind.

But only the gardeners can quite ever know Of the flowers they did tend And what it means to each of them To have them plucked before season's end.

Tell us, how does your garden now grow? With precious thoughts and memories, Endless tears and prayers all in a row.

Gary Zslec
Civil Engineer
Fanwood

On September 11, 2001, Carr Futures Inc. lost 69 employees. It should have been 70. I rarely arrived at my office on the 92nd Floor of 1 World Trade Center later than 8:30 a.m. However, on this day, I had reached the intersection of Lawrence Avenue and Route 22 when I realized I had left an important file at home. I returned home, picked up the documents and again began my normal drive - Route 22 to 78, to the Turnpike Spur and ultimately to a parking garage close to the Exchange Place Path Station.

From the Turnpike a saw smoke rising from 1 World Trade Center and heard on the car radio that a plane had crashed into one of the WTC towers. I initially assumed that it was a small private plane or a news helicopter. I arrived at Exchange Place and it was only then that I realized that I was witnessing a disaster of enormous magnitude. Smoke and flames seemed to envelop the entire top quarter of 1 WTC. It appeared that the 92nd Floor was below the floors that were burning but I just could not be sure. Within minutes of my arrival at Exchange Place, the second plane struck 2 World Trade Center. I had my cell phone with me and tried calling every office and cell phone number I could think of but the calls just didn't seem to go through. I felt absolutely powerless to do anything except pray.

I returned home, hoping that the telephone lines were still operable. I was able to contact Carr's Chicago office and tried to determine which employees were accounted for and who was missing. For hours and then days we kept hoping that people who had escaped would begin checking in but it never happened. Every one of Carr's employees who was on the 92nd Floor of 1 World Trade Center, perished. The people on the ninety-first floor got out. From 92 and above, the exits were hopelessly blocked; all of our people were trapped.

September 11, 2001 was to have been my first day back from vacation. On September 9, I had been out fishing off Block Island with my son and a group of friends. It was a great day and we had landed and released a good number of large striped bass. I was looking forward to talking about my exploits to Eddie, a longtime Carr colleague and avid salt-water fisherman. We never had the conversation. Eddie died on September 11.

Edward Z. Kassikian
President Emeritus
Carr Futures, Inc.
Westfield

I was in California on business when it happened; I wanted to do something, but I felt helpless to respond from where I was. However, ultimately I found a way as I now work for one of the companies who lost many people on September 11. It is very fulfilling to help them rebuild.

Gary McCready
Computer Systems Manager
Westfield

My generation has lived through the Viet Nam War, the assassinations of John F. Kennedy, Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King. Now 9/11/01.

We must live every day as if it may be our last, be thankful for our blessings, and never leave our family without letting them know how much we love and appreciate them.

Maryanne S. Connelly
Former Mayor of Fanwood

I grew up in Scotch Plains from age 4 through college graduation in upstate New York. I have always felt a kinship to New Jersey affairs even though I have lived in Maryland now for over 20 years. Your paper truly connected me to the horrible events of my "hometown community". I have often made many day trips back to New York in the last 20 years but the worst one was a trip late in September, 2001, when I saw for the first time that the WTC no longer existed. WE are a community and nation of great strength so I know deep down in my heart that we shall prevail.

Marilyn Weeks
Maryland

Because of September 11, we developed an awareness of what other war-torn nations have to endure. We remembered to hug our kids and to tell our friends that we loved them. We said the Pledge of Allegiance with a new heart. We remembered to thank God for making us Americans - something many of us hadn't done, in a long time.

Deborah Madison
Correspondent

After dropping my daughter off at school I came home and was beckoned by my neighbor to come over. Together we watched the events of September 11th unfold. He waited for her husband to call. He never did.

In the months that followed I watched as she struggled with how to tell her two children their father had died. I listened as she said words like murder, remains and faced life as a single mother. I joined her as she wrote his obituary for this very publication. I stood in awe as I watched her at her door comfort those who had come to comfort her.

A year later, one thing remains constant, a husband, a father, a son, brother and friend has left this world. One thing that has changed is one very strong woman has grown beyond the scope of what I think she had even imagined she could. She got a job. She runs a home. She raises two incredible children. She derives strength from family, notably his incredible sister Mary Jennings who lives in Mountaineer.

This lady exemplifies to me courage and the will to go on. She got herself out of bed everyday, faced the day and built a new life for herself. She placed herself back in the workforce. Most impressive is although her children have been faced with a new life, she has made sure it is a happy one.

Many in town already know this woman without her name being mentioned... Sally Cohen Alamo... all would agree... her husband, Andy, would be proud.

Anne Edmondson
Director of Marketing
O'Neil Software, Inc.
Westfield

The night before Gaile and I were at a well attended lecture at Drew by author David Halberstam, our age. He rhapsodized how safe from attack from any direction and well off we Americans were - even after traumas in our own lifetimes - the depression, Pearl Harbor and WW II, Korea, the Cold War, JFK and events youngsters know. To have our self-satisfied outlook so shattered and reversed 12 hours later, by such horrific events we witnessed on TV, will never be forgotten - or ignored. Our hearts go out to the thousands lost or otherwise affected by 9/11.

Garland "Bud" Boothe,
Mayor of Westfield, 1992-96

I pray the tragic events of 2001 will serve as a wake-up call to America. I don't believe we will end terrorism until we understand the root causes of hatred and seek God's help in eliminating them. Specifically, we need to learn from the anthrax attacks and employ both proven and emerging decision-support and optimization technologies to provide effective supply chain management from early detection and discovery to the delivery of medicines and vaccines. We need to stockpile flexible manufacturing facilities and expertise here in New Jersey and modify unwieldy FDA rules and regulations, like the ones that prevented BioPort in Lansing, Mich. from shipping anthrax vaccine to the Pentagon. Longer term, we need to reduce our dependence on foreign oil.

Gerard W. Cleaves
Professor
Westfield

On September 11, 2001, terrorists launched an horrific attack on U.S. soil in an effort to destroy the very heart of America - our freedoms and our way of life. In response, New Jerseyans from across the state have come together to reaffirm the spirit of liberty, which is our common heritage. We, as a state and as a nation, have grown stronger through our shared loss.

Assemblyman Thomas H. Kean, Jr.
Westfield

Americans have always risen to the great challenges, to the attacks against their families, their rights, their country. Before the cataclysm of Pearl Harbor, from Lexington to Valley Forge to Gettysburg to the Alamo, American citizens have gone into battle when it came time to stand up. After Dec. 7, 1941 when the world finally came to our shores, millions of civilians mobilized and without complaint fought for America, and for the rest of the free world much of which never thanked or honored them for that deliverance. We know the distant names: Iwo, Tarawa, Normandy, Chosin, Khe San, but now some of the world's rage and hate has come here, to America. If the assassins think that was a victory, they had better take careful note of the deep wellsprings of bravery, grace, compassion, and hope that rose once again in our citizens on that terrible day. Semper Fi, America, Semper Fi.

Geoffrey M. Gates
Businessman
Westfield